

April 5, 2012

FCC comment regarding Homeowner Association Covenants

I have been a licensed Amateur Operator since 1977 and hold an Amateur Extra Class license. I also hold a General Radiotelephone Operators License with a Radar Endorsement.

Early in my amateur radio experience when I was speaking with an old(er) ham about running an amplifier, his sage advice was "Boy, put your money in your antenna, not in an amplifier". Over the years, my own experience echoes that sage advice I received years ago and I pass that wisdom along to newer hams when the opportunity presents itself.

Several years ago, I was on vacation in Florida and made 20 meter (14mhz) contact with a friend of mine in Virginia. I was mobile running about 100 watts of power. He was operating a fixed station with about the same amount of power. The only difference was he was using a 3 element yagi style directional (beam) antenna. As an experiment, we started reducing the power on the stations and he was able to maintain good reliable communications to my car with 5 watts of power simply because he had a highly effective and directional antenna system.

If we were to take those same technical parameters and apply them to an emergency situation where the station in the affected area had only a marginal antenna and perhaps limited power available, it is quite easy to see how a directional and effective antenna system on the other end could mean the difference of establishing reliable communications in an area that has the victim of a widespread disaster.

The more restrictions placed on communications antennas, the less effective they become. I am not advocating allowing unlimited antenna structures on small residential lots, but the total ban of all outside antennas is equally unreasonable.

Some years ago, certain local governments tried to restrict radio antenna structures. PRB-1 intervened and made the difference with some reasonable accommodation. As a side note, the Commonwealth of Virginia passed similar and parallel legislation. Other states may have also passed similar laws.

In summary, the only thing that will come from either government or the private sector placing unreasonable restrictions on amateur antenna structures is a significant reduction in the ability to establish radio communications where it may be needed most.

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